

But if a Delegate who is engaged upon this marathon has any disposition to feel sorry for himself, this inclination is quickly forgotten by his sense of being caught up, for the moment at least, in a complex drama. It is a drama acted out upon a vast and sometimes shadowy stage, peopled by a strange and varied company of actors, none of them knowing certainly the theme of the drama and some doubtful even of the roles they are expected to play or the lines they are called upon to speak. All of them, I think, have occasional moments of discouragement, when they are tempted to believe that the play is but an inconsequential farce. But all of them equally are at times lifted up by the sense of being part of some great new epic in human affairs, the beginning of a cycle of enormous consequence upon the stage of human history.

We cannot be sure, of course, that a final curtain will not be rung down on the United Nations amidst scenes of violence, for I do not suppose there has been a time in history when people were so uncertain of their ability to solve by peaceful means the problems of their international relations. But I am quite sure of this: on the stage at the moment the action is vigorous, there is substance and significance to the theme, and there is more sense of purpose and direction in the drama than at any time since 1945.

There are many ways of looking at the United Nations. One may regard it as a piece of political machinery, designed to carry out negotiations amongst nations for the settlement of international problems. It may also be regarded as an organization the primary object of which is, through activities in the field of social and economic welfare, to remove the causes of war. Or, alternatively, it is sometimes regarded as a great international parliament, where the major issues of world affairs are talked out. If we regard the United Nations in this light, the importance of the process lies in the public debate itself rather than in the practical consequences which come from it. Again, the United Nations is sometimes regarded primarily as a security organization, the central purpose of which is to guarantee its members against invasion or attack. I think that all of these definitions of the role of the United Nations are in part correct, and if we are to make any true estimate of the effectiveness of that organization, we must examine it in all these roles.

If, to begin with, you consider the United Nations as an instrument for settling political problems, you will be surprised at the number of specific and practical international questions which find their way onto its agenda. The best example I can pick out is the disposition of the former Italian Colonies. In some ways, it is an accident that this subject is on the agenda of the United Nations, because responsibility for Italian Colonies was originally kept by the great powers at the end of the war. But when the great powers failed to agree, the question was brought to the General Assembly. This is new procedure, for the custom has always been for the victors in wars to divide up the spoils that they take from their enemy. We have now, however, for the first time, an effort being made in an international organization to clean up some of the aftermath of war. A settlement of the Italian Colonies problem is being worked out in the Assembly of the United Nations. It is not being a particularly quick or tidy process, and it